

3. The Wedding Ceremony

Significance :

In Sanskrit, marriage is termed Vivah which means to lift, to support or sustain. Indeed it is a means whereby man is able to support and sustain himself on his onward march to the supreme bliss. It is a union religiously solemnized whereby man is given a partner with whom he carries out the various sacrificial rites necessary for a householder. Among our 16 sanskaras it is perhaps the most important.

Ingredients :

The groom on leaving for the bride's residence or the place of the ceremony should be directed by his Priest what ingredients he should take along with him from the list below which gives the basic items only.

Wedding Day :

All Puja ingredients

2 large flower garlands, 2 small garlands, long bench for bride and groom, sweets for janwas, cord for tagpat, lota and thalee, Shank (conch) for Kanya Daan, Lawa (parched rice) for Hawan, Dhotee for groom, container with sindoor, yogurt, foil, Mango leaves, Var ka pani, Jewellery for bride.

N.B. The bride's brother and maternal uncle would be required under the Mandap during the ceremony.

The groom's elder brother is required to place the Tagpat on the bride.

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(a) Local Customs and Family Traditions in the Hindu Wedding

Before describing in detail the procedural steps in our wedding ceremony after the groom's arrival it is considered appropriate to note the place that local customs and family traditions play in our Wedding Rituals.

Our marriage ceremonies as existed in Vedic times were followed substantially in the Sutra period though the Grihyasutras, especially Parasara, Baudhayan and Aswalayan made certain changes e.g. Madhuparka, Laja Homa, Asmarohan, Hridayasparsha, Surya Darshan and Saptapadi. These latter were some additions they made.

After the period of the Grihyasutras other innovations arose. Local customs and family traditions began to play an important part in our wedding ceremonies. So important were they that if they conflicted with the express rules of the scriptures they were to prevail over them. These customs and traditions were called Deshachara or Lokriti and to this day they are observed in our wedding ceremonies. It would be true to say, therefore, that our wedding ceremony of the present day rests on the authority of the Vedas, the Grihyasutras and local customs coupled with family traditions. The student should, therefore, always observe these Deshachara as far as is proper and reasonable.

(b) Procedural Steps after Groom's Arrival at Bride's Residence

For quick reference I hereunder list the steps to be taken after the groom's arrival. A short description with appropriate Mantras is given in the text. Students should always consult the Vivah Sopang Vidhi for more details.

Procedural Steps

1. Garlanding of bride and groom's father on arrival of groom's party. Var Ka Pani given to bride's father.
2. Dvar Puja—*Short worship at entrance to bride's residence.

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3. Pariksha—Arti of groom by bride's mother and party.
4. Janwaas/Agya—Place for rest for groom and friends. Permission for ceremony to begin.
5. Imlee/Nahchoo—Giving of something sour to bride's mother by her brother-decoration of bride's toes.
6. Taag Paat (Raksha Sutra)—Protective cord for bride given by groom's eldest brother. Giving by him of gifts to bride. This is preceded by a Puja with bride under the mandap conducted by officiating priest.
7. Var Pujan—Honouring of groom formally under Mandap by bride's father.
8. Agni Sthapan—Enkindling of fire by assistant priest.
9. Shakhochar—Tracing of family tree of both bride and groom by priests.
10. Kanyadaan and Panigrahan—Giving away of bride and grasping her hand by groom.
11. Pawpujee—Anointing of feet of both bride and groom by relations of bride.
12. Homa—Fire ritual with appropriate Mantras.
13. Shila Rohan—Stepping of bride on stone.
14. Bhanwar—Seven circumambulations of fire.
15. Saptapadi—Seven steps to the North.
16. Surya/Dhruv Darshan—Gazing at the Sun or Pole star.
17. Saat Vachan—Seven vows.
18. Hrydaya Sparsh—Touching of heart.
19. Sindoor Daan—Rubbing of vermillion with bride on left of groom.
20. Garlanding of bride and groom.
21. Final offering in fire.
22. Rubbing of Ashes on bride and groom.
23. Final blessings by priests and assembly.
24. Departure of bride and groom from under mandap.
25. Return of groom for food (Khicharee).
26. Final departure of groom with bride.
27. Chaturthi Karma.

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Details of Steps

1. Garlanding of Fathers

Both the groom's and bride's father embrace each other on arrival of the wedding party at the place of the ceremony. They garland each other while the priests chant the Swasti Vachan. A pot with water is handed by groom's father to bride's father. This is called "Var Ka Pani" and is sprinkled on the bride before she enters the Mandapa. It should be noted that the groom's mother and female friends do not attend the wedding ceremony. This custom is changing however.

2. Dvar Puja

The groom and his party are now escorted to the entrance of the bride's residence. The groom is garlanded. Vedic hymns are chanted by the priests in attendance. A short puja takes place. A gift is given to the groom by the bride's father. In Hindu cultural tradition such special honour is given to priests, kings and grooms.

3. Pariksha

The groom now stands and walks a few paces where the mother of the bride and her female friends welcome him. They honour him with Aarti, give him gifts and extol his virtues in their songs. Some of them may be seeing him for the first time and for this reason Pariksha, which means an examination, is done. They see his face and his physical features. In ancient times and perhaps even now in India the bride's mother never sees a groom until he appears on the wedding day. Nowadays couples court freely and even visit each other's homes prior to marriage hence it is hardly likely for the bride's mother not to know the groom prior to the wedding. As regards courtship as practised today I may say that Hinduism frowns upon this. It is not a part of our culture or tradition. Moreover pre-marital intercourse is repugnant to the whole concept and spirit of the Hindu marriage.

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4. (a) Janwaas

After the Pariksha ceremony is over the groom and his friends repair to a place of rest provided by the bride's father. Jan means people and Waas means to rest. In India as well as in other parts of the world grooms travel long distances for the marriage ceremony. It is fitting therefore that they tarry for a while and obtain some rest prior to the elaborate ceremony to follow. The bride's parents are always hosts at the wedding which normally takes place at the bride's residence or at some other place provided by the bride's parents.

4. (b) Agya

Agya means permission. After the groom has rested a while the bride's father and priest call upon the groom seeking permission of the groom to commence the marriage rituals. The priests on both sides extol the virtues of the groom and the bride in their chants. The groom is fed with a portion of sweets by the bride's father. A hindu traditionally offers sweetmeats to a guest who enters his home. Permission having been obtained the bride's father and priest depart.

Agya slokas to be chanted are as follows :

श्लोकाः Bride's priest

एतत्सभार्न्तगत पण्डिताग्रे वक्तुं समर्थोपि न भारती मे ।

तथापि श्रीमद्भवतः प्रसादाद्द्वीमि पदं खलु धार्ष्ट्यतोहम् ॥

Respect and honoured samdhi and friends I welcome you. In such an assembly of wise and learned persons I find myself incapable of speaking. Yet with your leave I have made up my mind to say a few slokas on this auspicious occasion.

वदन्ति लोकाः सुतजन्म हर्षदं तथापि कन्याजनिरेव शस्यते ।

यदस्तर्था द्विज वंश केतवः समागता मुक्तिपदस्य हेतवः ॥

Beloved Samdhiji the whole world says that one should

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rejoice at the birth of a son but I say to you that the birth of a daughter is an occasion equally for rejoicing for is it not because of the birth of a daughter that today all these educated and honourable persons have come to my humble abode? Indeed we are lucky to have such persons present for through their blessings and goodwill we are sure to attain supreme bliss.

Groom's priest

दुरेऽपि श्रुत्वा भवदीयकीर्तिं कर्णौ च तृप्तौ न तु चक्षुषी मे।
तयोर्विवादं परिहर्तुकामः समागतोऽहं तव दर्शनाय॥

Honoured Samdhiji these ears were blessed on many occasions upon hearing your virtues but the eyes were not so blessed and so were dissatisfied. Today with your presence both ears and eyes are satisfied.

(See Vivah Sopang Vidhi for more slokas)

After these slokas the groom's permission is asked for the ceremony to commence. Upon this being given he is fed by the bride's father with sweets. His other friends are also given sweets. The bride's father and his priest then leave.

5. Imlee/Nahchoo

The Bride is now slowly led into the Mandapa called Marow (a decorated canopied enclosure) where the ceremony is to take place. Her toes are decorated. Her mother sits behind her. The maternal uncle of the bride now gives the bride's mother something sour to taste. Imlee means tamarind. The significance of this is that "sweet" relations between bride and mother which hitherto obtained are now temporarily to become sour since the bride will soon be departing from the home of her birth where she was nurtured and brought up with love and affection by her parents. The bride is presently to leave her childhood companions and the comfort of her parents' home to seek a new life and new friends in a new home. She now embarks

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on a new ship, as it were, to share the joys and sorrows of her new life with her husband far away from the hitherto tender care of her loving parents. Moments of sadness are about to prevail. Imlee is therefore given as a symbol of this momentary sadness of parting and also as a reminder to the bride's mother to be prepared to endure the bride's parting with fortitude. The departure of the bride after such eclat and grandeur of the marriage ceremony can only provoke tears and create a sudden sourness in the midst of joy. Hence Imlee. After this the bride sits and does a short Puja ceremony conducted by her priest.

The bride's priest usually officiates at the wedding ceremony. The basic Puja ritual is done here.

6. Taagpat (Raksha Sutra)

Raksha Sutra known to all as Taag pat is a cord of protection. In this part of the ceremony the groom's elder brother enters the Mandapa and after a short ritual performed by the priest he places a cord of protection around the neck of the bride. In placing this cord on the bride's neck the groom's elder brother takes a vow to protect the bride in all distress and adversities which may befall her. Especially in times of matrimonial differences when all hopes for the bride may be lost, when for her only darkness prevails, when her parents are absent and no succour or advice from them is forthcoming then her only hope is her husband's elder brother. He must stand by her and make sure that wise counsel, advice and protection are properly meted out to her. This is the solemn vow he takes in giving Raksha Sutra. His absence at the appropriate time can mean the shattering of all her hopes and aspirations and perhaps the end of her marriage. The Hindu marriage ceremony thus wisely caters for such eventualities in Raksha Sutra. In this ceremony the Priest asks the bride and the groom's brother to do Ganesh Puja after washing their hands. The brother then places the cord on the bride's neck and ties her wrists.

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He then takes up the suitcase of gifts and a short Sankalpa is read after which the case is handed over to the bride. The priest should conclude with

मंगलं भगवान् विष्णू मंगलं गण्डध्वजः
मंगलं पुण्डरीकाक्षो मंगलाय तनो हरिः

The bride then slowly withdraws from the Mandapa and goes to her chamber

7. Var Puja

The groom hitherto in Janwas is now invited to come under the Manadapa. He is accompanied by his priest and close relations. As he appears all should stand in his honour. The bride's father then holds his right hand and humbly requests him to sit on a low bench which is blessed by the officiating priest before it is offered. The groom takes his seat. The audience sit. The Puja commences. The steps are as follows: Arti is done while the groom is still standing.

(a) *Welcoming mantras:* साधुभवानास्तमिति प्रजापति ऋषिः ब्रह्मा देवता। यजुश्छन्दः वरार्चने विनियोगः॥

ओं साधुभवानास्तामर्थं यिष्यमो भवन्तम्॥

(b) *Give a dhoti or cloth to groom:* ॐ बिष्टरो विष्टरो विष्टरः ओं विष्टरं प्रति गृह्यताम्॥ विष्टरं प्रतिगृह्णामि॥ वर्षास्मी-त्यार्थवर्ण ऋषिर्विष्टरो देवता अनुष्टुप्छन्दः उपवेशने विनियोगः

The groom then sits on this cloth or dhoti.

(c) *Washing of feet:* ओं पाद्यम् पाद्यम् पाद्यम् इत्यन्येनोक्ते। ओं पाद्यम् प्रतिगृह्यताम्। पाद्यम् प्रतिगृह्णामि।

विराजो दोहोऽसीति प्रजापति ऋषि आपो देवता यजुश्छन्दः। जलग्रहेण पाद प्रक्षालने विनियोगः। ॐ विराजो दोहोसि विराजो दोहमशीय मयि पाद्यायै विराजो दोहः

(d) *Arghya:* This is a combination of flowers, rice, water, chandan, doob in a foil cup. This cup is then given to the groom. The groom with his right hand fingers sprinkles some of this liquid on his head and in the eastern direction.

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This Mantra is said at the time.

ओं अर्घो अर्घो अर्घ । इत्यन्येनोक्ते ओ अर्घ प्रतिगृह्यताम् । ॐ अर्घ
प्रतिगृह्णामि ॥

आपस्थ इति मंत्रस्य सिन्धुद्वीपे ऋषिः आपो देवता अनुष्टुपछन्द । अर्घ्याक्षतादि
धारणे विनियोगः ॥

The groom leaves the cup aside

(e) *Achman*: The groom sips twice from a foil cup filled with pure water. After this he leaves it aside. The Mantras are:

ओं आचमनीयम् आचमनीयम् आचमनीयम् । आचमनीयम् प्रतिगृह्यताम् ।
ओं आचमनीयम् प्रतिगृह्णामि । ओ आमागन्निति परमेष्ठी ऋषि बृहतीछन्दः
आपो देवता । अपामुपस्पर्शने विनियोगः ओं आमागन्यशसा स० सुज वचर्सा
तं मा कुरुष्विदं प्रजानामधिपतिं पशूनामरिष्टं तनूनाम् ॥

(f) *Madhuparka*: Mix ghee, dahi, honey in a foil cup and give to groom. The cup is covered with foil cover. The groom is directed to do the following:

He takes off the cover holding cup in right hand.

Read this Mantra:

ओं मधुपर्को मधुपर्को, मधुपर्को । ओ मधुपर्कं प्रति गृह्यताम् । ओं मधुपर्कं
प्रति गृह्णामि । मित्रस्य त्वेति मंत्रस्य बृहस्पति ऋषि । मधुपर्को देवता ।
यजुश्छन्दः मधुपर्कावेक्षणे विनियोगः ॥

The groom then peeps in the cup. Read the Mantra:

मित्रस्य त्वा चक्षुषा प्रतीक्षे:

The groom then transfers the cup to his left hand.

Read:

देवस्य त्वा सवितुश्चन्द्रसवे श्विनो ब्राह्मव्याम् पूष्णो हस्ताव्याम् ।

The groom thus stirs the liquid with his thumb and ring finger and sprinkles some on the ground twice. Read these Mantras:

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ओं नमः श्यावास्यायान्शने यत्त आविद्धं तत्ते निष्कृन्तामि:

The groom then touches the liquid to his lips three times and places the cup nearby. Read this Mantra:

ओं यन्मधुनो मधव्यं परमं रूपत्राद्यं तेनाहं मधुनो मधव्येन परमेणं रूपेणान्नाद्येन परमो मधव्योऽन्नादोऽसानि ॥

He then sips water 3 times.

(g) *Anganyasa* : Touching various parts of the body with water.

ओः वाङ्म आस्येऽस्तु	- lips
ओः नसेमे प्राणोऽस्तु	- nostrils
ओः अक्ष्णोर्मे चक्षरस्तु	- eyes
ओः कर्णयोर्मे श्रोत्रमस्तु	- ears
ओ वाहोर्मे बलमस्तु	- shoulder
ओं ऊर्वोर्मे ओजोऽस्तु	- knees
ओं अरिष्टानी मेऽङ्गानि तनुस्तन्वा मे सह सन्तु	- all over the body.

After this a gift of a cow is given to the groom. It is customary here to give a gold cow or money in lieu. The groom accepts same and breaks a piece of Kush grass throwing same on the ground. The following Mantras are chanted:

ओं गौ गौ गौः प्रतिगृह्यताम् । ओ माता रूद्राणां दुहिता वसूना १
स्वसादिव्यानाम मृतस्य नाभिः ॥

प्रनुवोचं चिकितुषे जनाय मागामनागा मदिति वधिष्ट मम चामुष्य अमुक
शर्मणो यजमानस्य (Take name of bride's father here). च उभयोः
पाम्पा हतः ॐ उत्सृजत तृणान्यन्तु ॥

Var Pujan ends here

8. Agni Sthapan

The sacrificial fire should now be enkindled by the assistant priest (usually the groom's priest) with appropriate Mantras. This fire should be kept burning until the end of the ceremony.

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9. Shakhochar

The bride is now slowly led from her chambers to the mandapa and sits in the lap of her father. Her mother sits on the right side of the father. Both are "bound" together. They all face the groom. The priests on both side now trace the family tree of the bride and groom, verifying that no relationship between them by consanguinity or affinity exists. As far as possible marriage between relations is to be avoided. Slokas are chanted by the priests mentioning the name of the great grand father, grand father and father of the bridegroom. The groom's priest starts first followed by the bride's priest. This chanting is done thrice. For the student I give a sample of slokas and recitation. Enthusiastic students should endeavour to learn some more slokas and thus amplify on their recitation : See the SOPANG VIDHI

गंगा सिन्धु सरस्वती च यमुना गोदावरी नर्मदा
कावेरी सरयूमहेन्द्र तनया चर्मण्वती वेदिका ।
क्षिप्रा वेत्रवती महासुरनदी ख्याता च या गण्डकी
पुण्याः पुण्यजलैः समुद्रसहिता कुर्वन्तु वो मङ्गलम् ॥
लक्ष्मीः कौस्तुभ परिजातक सुरा धन्वन्तरिश्रन्द्रमा ।
धेनुः कामदुधा सुरेश्वर गजो रम्भा च देवाङ्गना ।
अश्व सप्तमुखो विषं हरिधनुः शंखोऽमृतं चाम्बुधेः
रत्नानीति चतुर्दश प्रतिदिनं कुर्वन्तु वो मङ्गलम् ॥

After the above slokas recite the following:

ॐ स्वस्तिश्री सच्चिदानन्द कंद नंद नंदन चरण कमल
भक्त्यानुराग धर्ममूर्ति धर्मावतार अमुक प्रवरान्वितस्य
अमुक गोत्रस्य अमुक नाम्नः यजमानस्य

Groom's Priest

प्रपौत्रोऽयम् - Take name of gr. grand father

पौत्रोऽयम् - Take name of grand father

पुत्रोऽयम् - Take name of father

Bride's Priest

प्रपौत्रीयम्

पौत्रीयम्

पुत्रीयम्

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प्रयतपाणि शरणं प्रपद्ये स्वस्ति संवादेष्वभयं वो वृद्धि वरकन्ययोर्मङ्गल-
मास्ताम—वरश्चिरजीवी कन्या सावित्री भूदात्

10. Kanyadaan

Kanya means a maiden bride and Daan means to give. This is one of the most important part of the Hindu marriage. It is giving away of the bride by her father and mother. The bride now richly adorned and wearing a red sari enters the Mandapa and seats herself in the lap of her father. She then holds in her right hand a Shank (a white conch shell) in which there is placed a secret gift known only to the bride's parents. The bride indeed is a special gift and her innermost secrets are only to be known to her groom. Hence the secret gift. The groom grasps the hand of the bride below with his right hand and water is thrown from above in a continuous flow for about two (2) minutes by the bride's brother. The priest reads the sacred vow which the bride's father takes in giving his daughter away. This is the final moment when the bride's father can truly say that the bride still belongs to him. She is still his child hence she sits in his lap. She loved, cherished and obeyed her father hitherto and no one else. Now in all solemnity she is handed to the man whom she will love and honour henceforward. The bride's father now vows by the sun, moon, stars, the deities and by man to give his daughter away to the groom. So solemn, private and secret is this moment that it is instructed that the immediate surroundings be somewhat enclosed during the time of Kanyadaan. There is indeed no secrecy at all for the ceremony is done in public but the bride possesses secrets which only the groom will hence-forward know of, hence the symbolic display of secrecy and privacy.

As regards the throwing of water on the conch this is a request by the bride's parents both of whom are present that the relationship now about to be forged may remain unbroken and unsullied even as the pure unbroken flow of water now being thrown.

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The right hand of the bride and groom should be dyed with turmeric paste at this time. Both bride and groom now look at each other.

The Priest chants the Sankalpa which should end as follow:

... अमुक गोत्र सपन्निक, अमुक प्रवरान्वितस्य, अमुक सगोत्रस्य प्रपौत्राय, पौत्राय, पुत्राय (for the groom) अमुक प्रवरान्वितस्य, अमुक सगोत्रस्य, प्रपौत्रीम्, पौत्रीम्, पुत्रीम् (for the bride) अमुक प्रवराय, अमुक सगोत्राय (name of groom here) वराय अमुक प्रवरामुक गोत्रामुक (name of bride) नाम्नीनां श्री रूपिणीं वरार्थिनीं कन्या नाना वस्तुभी सहितं, अत्मनश्च पवित्रीकर्तुं देवाग्निं गुरु ब्राह्मण सन्निधौ यथोपकल्पितो पस्कर सहितां श्रौत स्मार्त सहायिनीम् अग्नादि साक्षिक इमां कन्यां प्रजापतीदैवत्यां स्वर्गादि फल प्राप्तिकामः तथा पत्नीत्वेन तुभ्यमहं संप्रददे ॥

The groom says swasti and grasping the bride's hands takes her over to his side where she sits on his right on the same low bench on which he sits. The nuptial knot is now tied. Panigrahan is taking the bride's hand by the groom into his and leading her over to his right side where she now sits.

11. Pawpujee

The parents of the bride now wash the toes of the bride and groom giving them gifts. A few close relations should give gifts at this time pouring water on the feet of the bride and groom. Because of time constraints only a few relations should be invited to do this ceremony.

12. Homa

The Homa, or Fire Ritual, of our Vivah Sanskar is very elaborate. It is divided into six (6) sections, each section following the other. They are described as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| (1) Mahavhyahriti Homa | (4) Jaya Homa |
| (2) Prayaschit Homa | (5) Abhyatan Homa |
| (3) Rashtrabhrit Homa | (6) Laja Homa |

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Some details of the Jaya and Laja Homa are given in the text. The Mahavhyahriti Homa and Prayaschit Homa can be found in my 'Basic Puja Manual for Student Priests' now published. Because of pressure of time at modern day weddings, due to diverse causes, it is considered that at least 2 mantras from (3) and (5) above should be chanted. The student can add to his storehouse of Mantras by referring to the Vivah Sopang Vidhi and/or Sanskar Vidhi by Madwacharya in which texts all the above Homas are to be found.

The Mantras of (3) (4) and (5) above "contain prayers for victory and protection and aim at hostile powers known or unknown to the bridegroom."

Laja Homa is symbolic of "fecundity and prosperity."

Jaya Homa

ओं चितन्त्र स्वाहा इदं चित्ताय न मम
ओं चिशिच स्वाहा इदं चित्त्यै न मम
ओं आकूतन्त्र स्वाहा इदं आकुताय न मम
ओं विज्ञातं च स्वाहा इदं विज्ञाताय न मम
ओं विज्ञातिश्च स्वाहा—इदं विज्ञाव्यै न मम
ओं मन्त्र स्वाहा—इदं मनसे न मम
ओं शक्करीश्च स्वाहा इदं शक्करीभ्यो न मम
ओं दर्शश्च स्वाहा इदं दर्शाय न मम
ओं पौर्णमासं च स्वाहा इदं पौर्णमासाय न मम
ओं बृहच्च स्वाहा इदं बृहते न मम
ओं रथन्तरन्त्र स्वाहा इदं रथन्तराय न मम

Laja Homa

After these oblations both bride and groom should be directed to stand. The nuptial knot should already have been tied by the attendant seated behind them. While standing both give 3 offerings in the fire with these mantras:

१. अर्यमा मित्याथवर्ण ऋषिरग्निदेवताऽनुष्टुप छन्दो लाजा होमे

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विनियोगः इयंनार्युपब्रूत इत्यथर्वण ऋषिर्गिदेवता त्रिष्टुप्छन्दः
लाजा होमे विनियोग ।

इदं नार्यु पब्रूते लाजानावपन्निका आयुष्मानस्तु मे पतिरेधन्ता ज्ञातयो
मम स्वाहा ॥

२. ओं अर्यमणं देवं कन्या अग्रिमयक्षत । सत्रो अयर्मा देवः प्रेतो मुञ्चतु
मापतेः स्वाहा । इदमर्थ्यप्णो देवाय न मम ॥

३. इमाल्लजा नित्याथर्वण ऋषिर्गिदेवता त्रिष्टुप्छन्द लाजाहोमे विनियोग
इमा ल्लजानाव पाप्यग्नौ समृद्धिकरणं तव मम तुभ्यंच संवननं
तदग्रितुमन्य तामिय स्वाहाः इदमन्ये न मम ।

13. Shilarohan

The parties still standing the groom grasps the right thumb of the bride and directs her to place her right toes on a stone. (The Lorha - grinding stone could be used). The Mantras below are chanted. The faith and fidelity of the bride are as strong and solid as the rock on which she now places her toes. The groom accepting her pledge, thus demonstrated, removes the rock from under her toes. The following Mantras are chanted.

ओं गृह्णामि ते सौभगत्वाय हस्तं मया पत्या जरदष्टिर्घं धासः भगो
अयर्मा सविता पुरन्धिर्महं त्वादुर्गाह पत्याय देवाः ॥

ओं आरोहेम मश्मान मश्मेवत्व ७ स्थिरा भव । अभितिष्ठ पृतन्यतोऽव
बाधस्व पृतनायतः ॥

14. Bhanwar

Bhanwar means a circle. It is in this context going around the fire. All sections of our Hindu community are familiar with this part of the Hindu marriage ceremony. The bride leads first with the groom behind her. Thereafter the groom leads with the bride following behind. Together they do seven (7) circumambulations. They in turn throw grains in the fire known to us as Lawa. Their garments are knotted together as they go around the fire. The significance of throwing grains is that they both will join together in

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performing the Yajnas, sacrifices and religious rites which a Hindu householder is required to perform throughout his marriage life. Moreover the bride by leading first is demonstrating her determination to stand first beside her husband in all his joys and sorrows during their married life. The groom sees her expression of devotion and so takes over the lead in acceptance of her pledge. The grains are given to the bride and groom by the bride's brother standing nearby. During circumambulation any appropriate mantras or songs could be sung. Nowadays soft shehnai music is played at this time Two Vedic Mantras below should be chanted.

1. तुभ्यमग्रे पर्यवहन्सूर्या वहतुना सहः पुनः
पतिभ्यो जायां दाऽअग्रे प्रजया स्वाहाः

on the 4th circumambulation say.

2. ओं भगाय स्वाहा - इदं भगाय नमः

The groom leads starting with the 5th circumambulation until the 7th is completed. Still standing they do SAPTA PADI.

15. Sapta Padi

SAPTA PADI means literally seven steps. The bride and groom now take seven steps to the North together. This is the first combined action of them both. A request to the Divine is made at each step firstly for sufficiency of grain, secondly for bodily strength, thirdly for sufficient means at all times, fourthly for continuous joy and harmony among the couple and their respective families, fifthly for cows, sixthly for the ability to partake of the joys of the seasons, and seventhly for continued companionship until death parts them. It is evident that these requests or at least some of them are those typical of the householder in an agricultural community. And this is rightly so for India has always been for centuries an agricultural community. Even

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in Vedic times the wealth of the householder was measured by the number of cows and grains he possessed. Sapta padi is an essential part of the Hindu marriage ceremony. The priest should at no time leave this out however pressed he may be for time.

The Pandit reads the following explaining at each step.

1st step— ॐ एकमिषे विष्णु स्त्वानयतु

Oh bride—may you never be short of grains for our household.

2nd step— ॐ द्वे उर्जे विष्णुस्त्वा नयतु

May the Lord always bless you with bodily strength

3rd step— ॐ त्रीणि रायस्पोषाय विष्णुस्त्वा नयतु

May the Lord bless you with enough wealth for your household.

4th step— ॐ चत्वारि मायो भवाय विष्णुस्त्वा नयतु

May Lord bless you with happiness in your new home and amongst our respective families.

5th step— ॐ पञ्च पशुभ्यो विष्णुस्त्वा नयतु

May your livestock, bipeds, quadrupeds which you acquire during our life be increased.

6th step— ॐ षड् ऋतुभ्यो विष्णुस्त्वा नयतु

May you have the ability always to enjoy the beauty of the seasons.

7th step— ॐ सखे सप्तपदा भव सा मामनुव्रता भव विष्णुस्त्वा नयतु

Be thou devoted to me.

16. Surya/Dhruv Darshan

The bride and groom still standing should be made to gaze skywards in the direction of the sun if the ceremony occurs during the day or on the Pole star if the wedding is in the

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night. Indeed there should always be light and constancy in their conjugal life. The undermentioned Mantras should be read.

For gazing at sun—

तच्चक्षुर्देवहितम्पुरस्ताच्छुक्रमुच्चरत्
पश्येम शरदः शतजीवेम शरदः शत ७
शृणुयाम शरदः शतम्प्रब्रवाम शरदः
शतमदीनाः स्याम शरदः शतम्भूयश्च
शरदः शतात् ॥

For gazing at Pole star—

ध्रुवमसिधुवं त्वा पश्यामि ध्रुवैधिपोष्या-
मयि मह्यं त्वादाद् ब्रह्मस्यतिर्मया
प्रत्याप्रजावती संजीव शरदः शतम्:

17. Saat Vachan

The bride and groom now sit, the bride still on his right. She then, through the priest asks the groom to take seven vows. The groom having made these vows in turn asks the bride to take just one vow. These vow are given hereunder and must be chanted in Sanskrit and explained. After the vows the bride goes on the left hand side of the groom and sits besides him.

First vow:

तीर्थ व्रतो द्यापन यज्ञदानं मया सह त्वं यदि कर्म कुर्या
बामाङ्गमाया मि तदा त्वदीयं जगाद् वाक्यं प्रथमं कुमारी ॥

Trans.: If ever oh groom you desire to go on any pilgrimage or give any gifts or do any Yajna or vrat then I ask that my consent be obtained and I join with you on such occasions. Should you agree then I will go on your left hand side.

Second Vow:

हव्यप्रदानं रमरान् पितृंश्च कव्य प्रदानैर्यदि पूजयेथाः

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वामाङ्ग मायामि तदा त्वदीयं जगाद कन्या वचनं द्वितीयम्।

Trans.: If at any time you, oh groom, desire to do any form of worship to the Divine or perform sacrificial rite for your departed ancestors then I ask that I be allowed to join with you on such occasions. Should you make this promise then I shall sit on your left hand side.

Third Vow:

कुटुम्बरक्षाभरणे यदि त्वं कुर्याः पशूनां परिपालनञ्च
वामाङ्ग मायामि तदा त्वदीयं जगाद कन्या वचनं तृतीयम्

Trans.: I ask that I be in full charge of our household and I be allowed without let or hindrance to do my duty in caring for our parents. Moreover if we should rear any dumb beast then I ask that I join with you in their care and protection. Promise this and I will then sit on your left hand side.

Fourth Vow:

आयव्ययौ धान्यधनादिकानां पृष्ट्वा निवेशं च गृहे निदध्याः
वामाङ्गमायामि तदा त्वदीयं जगाद कन्या वचनं चतुर्थम्।

Trans.: Whatever through your earnings whether wealth or grains, should come into our household I ask that I be consulted fully in using same. Promise this and I shall sit on your left hand side.

Fifth Vow:

देवालया रामतडाग कूप वापीर्विदध्या यदि पूजयेथाः
वामाङ्गमायामि तदा त्वदीयं जगाद कन्या वचनं च पंचमम्॥

Trans.: If ever, oh groom, you desire to construct a temple for worship, a well or pond or garden

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for general use then I ask that I be consulted and that I join with you in their inauguration ceremonies. Promise this, oh groom and I shall then sit on your left hand side.

Sixth Vow

देशान्तरे वा स्वपुरान्तरे वा यदा विदध्याः क्रयविक्रयौ त्वम्
वामाङ्गमायामि तदा त्वदीयं जगाद कन्या वचनं च षष्ठम्॥

Trans.: Whatever trade, business or occupation you engage in at home or abroad I ask that you allow me in assisting you in same. Promise me this and I shall sit on your left hand side.

Seventh Vow:

न सेवनीय यदि पारकीया त्वया भवोद्भाविनि कामिनीती
वामाङ्गमायामि तदा त्वदीयं जगाद कन्या वचनं च सप्तम॥

Trans.: Whether in joy or in sorrow, in sickness or health, in poverty or in wealth promise that you will honour, respect love and be devoted to me to the exclusion of all others. Should you promise this then I shall sit on your left hand side.

The groom having answered in the affirmative now asks the bride to make one promise.

Groom's request of the Bride:

मदीय चिन्तानुगतं च चित्तं सदा मदाङ्गापरिपालनं च ।

पतिव्रता धर्मं परायणत्वं कुर्याः सदा सर्वमिमं प्रयत्नम् :

Trans.: Promise oh bride that you shall always be devoted to me alone in thought, word and deed carrying out your wifely duties in accordance with our dharma.

The bride having agreed, the priest then sprinkles water on them both and the bride is slowly led over to take her

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seat on the left side of the groom. In sprinkling water on them the priest chants.

ओं आपः शिवाः शिवतमाः शान्ताः शान्तत मास्तास्ते कृणवन्तु
भेषजमितिः ॥

18. Hrydaya Sparsh

The groom then places his right hand gently near the chest of the bride. This is symbolically uniting their hearts. The priest reads:

ममव्रते ते हृदयं दधामि मम चित्तमनुचितं ते अस्तु ।
मम वाचमेकमना जुषस्व प्रजापतिष्ठा नियुनक्तु मह्यम् ॥

Oh bride may Prajapati join thee to me. Into my heart
I take thy heart. May we always be united together.

19. Sindoor Daan

The bride and groom are now covered with a sheet of cloth. Covering is a custom which has hardened into a rule. The groom then places sindoor on her forehead. The sindoor is the traditional mark of a Hindu woman whose husband is alive. The groom requests his bride to keep this mark on her forehead saying

"I bedeck thee, oh bride with this mark of mine.
Keep it as long as I live. May you always be
happy and have long life"

The priest reads the Mantra :

ॐ सुमङ्गली रियं वधूरिमा ॐ समेत पश्यत
सौभाग्य मस्यै दत्त्वायाऽथास्तं विपरेतन ॥
ॐ व्वाम मद्य सवितर्व्वाम मुश्वो दिवे दिवे
व्वाम स्म भ्यह सावी ॥

Four other married women can thus adjust the sindoor on the bride's head. The cover is then removed.

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20. Garlanding of Bride/Groom

It is customary these days for the bride/groom to garland each other. This is the appropriate time. Both stand and face each other. The bride puts her garland on the groom who then does likewise. They then sit. If Mangal Sutra is to be given to the bride by the groom this could be done here. Rings could be blessed here.

21. Final Offerings in Fire

The final offerings by bride/groom in the fire are accompanied by the following chanting:

ओं मूर्धनन्दिवोऽरतिमृथिब्ध्यावैश्वानर मृतऽआजात मग्निम् । कवि
ॐ सम्प्राज मतिथिञ्जनानामा सत्रापात्र जन यन्त देवाः स्वाहा ॥

22. Rubbing of Ashes

Ashes from the Havan Kund are then rubbed on the bride/groom. Care should be taken not to soil their dresses.

ॐ त्र्यायुषं जमदग्ने	- on the forehead
ॐ कश्यपस्य त्र्यायुषम्	- on the cheek/neck
ॐ यद्वेवेषु त्र्यायुषम्	- on the right shoulder
ॐ तन्नो तत्ते अस्तु त्र्यायुषम्	- on the chest

23. Final Blessings by Priests and by Assembly

The priest then gives chandan to bride/groom who remain seated while the whole assembled gathering stand to give their final blessings to the newly weds. The parents of both bride/groom and other relations should stand near the couple with flower in their hands, throwing on the couple as the chanting proceeds. The groom's mother generally does not attend the ceremony. The priest starts with his blessings in slokas as follows:

गणाधिपो भानुशशी धरासुतो
बुधो गुरुभार्गव सूर्य नन्दनौ ।

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राहुश्च केतु प्रभृतिर्नवग्रहाः

कुर्वन्तु वः पूर्ण मनोरथं सदा ॥

गंगा च क्षिप्रा यमुना सरस्वती

गोदावरी वेन्नवती च नर्मदा ।

सा चन्द्र भागा वरुणा असी नदी

कुर्वन्तु वः पूर्ण मनोरथं सदा ॥

Water from the Kalash should be sprinkled on them by the priest. The assembly should now join in the following blessing for health, peace, joy and happiness for the bride and groom.

पशुपति द्युपतिं धरणीपतिं भुजगलोक पतिं च सतीपतिम् प्रणत भक्त
जनार्ति हरं परं प्रति दिनं कुशलं जय मंगलम् ॥

न जनको जननी न च सोदरो न तनयो न च भूरिबलंकुलम्, अवति
कोऽपि न काल वशं गतं प्रति दिनं कुशलं जय मंगलम् ॥

मुरजडिण्डिम वाद्य विलक्षणं मधुर पच्यम् नादविशारदम् प्रभव भूत
गणैरपि सेवितम् प्रति दिनं कुशलं जय मंगलम् ॥

शरणदं सुखदं शरणन्वितं शिव शिवेति शिवेति नतं नृणाम् अभयदं
करुणा वरुणा लयं प्रति दिनं कुशलं जय मंगलम् ॥

24. Departure of Bride/Groom

After the blessings the couple should stand and bow to the feet of their parents and elders and slowly leave the Mandapa repairing to the Kohbar; if there is one. The bride's mother then takes off the Mour (or other head dress) of the groom and gives him a gift. Some levities are now indulged in here by bride and groom in the prescence of bride's mother and other female friends.

25. Return for Khicharee and

26. Final Departure

The groom, now much relaxed, returns to the Mandapa and sits with his relations for dinner called Khicharee. Here

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again he is given gifts by the bride's parents and other relations. After dinner the groom goes in, collects his bride and departs for home. It is customary for the bride to return to her home the next day where she stays for 1 week after which she leaves permanently for the groom's house.

27. Chaturthi Karma

This is done on the fourth day after marriage. This ritual has fallen into desuetude though orthodox families still observe this rule.